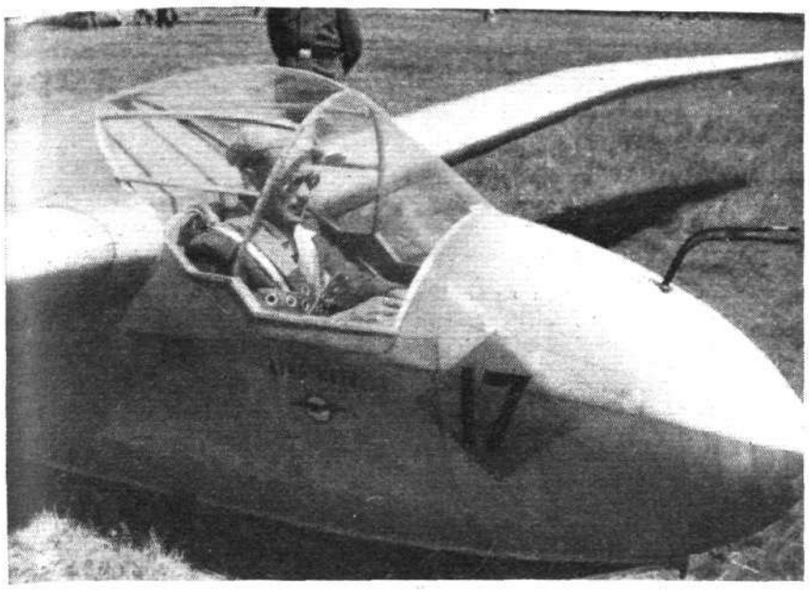

(Above) Mr. G. O. Smith in one of the new King Kites.
(Right) Mr. P. A. Wills in the Hjordis, with his brother Richard, who acted as interpreter, in attendance.

SOARING INTERNATIONALLY

A Member of the British Contingent Continues the Story of the Wasserkuppe Competition

THE first week of the International Soaring Competitions at the Wasserkuppe, in Central Germany, brought only three days of good soaring weather. Some flying, was, however, possible every day of the week, and, as a result of increased experience in flying from the site, the performance of the British team of pilots showed a steady improvement as compared with that of their competitors.

Mr. Wills's flight of 55 miles on the opening day, June 4, was mentioned in *Flight* last week. On this day eleven pilots got away on cross-country flights, while fourteen failed to find the necessary good thermal currents and landed again on the mountain side or down in the valley below. The furthest flights of the day were to Hamburg, three pilots reaching this city, 219 miles from the Wasserkuppe, and landing conveniently on the aerodrome. They were Heini Dittmar and Hanna Reitsch, of Germany, and Mynarski, of Poland. Fräulein Reitsch, who flew a brand-new machine with a high-speed range actually overtook Mr. Wills, who was on his way to Langensalza in the Hjordis, and lingered awhile in his vicinity, apparently trying to induce him to co-operate in the finding of thermals, to their mutual benefit, though unfortunately Mr. Wills did not realise her intentions at the time. He last saw her going rapidly eastwards although Hamburg is to the north. It appears that both Fräulein Reitsch and Herr Dittmar guessed that there would be little thermal activity over the plain to the north of Erfurt, upon which Mr. Wills was forced to land, and therefore worked their way round by the hilly country to the east of it before turning north again. Local knowledge certainly counts for a good deal in a soaring competition!

Among other distance flights on the same day were those of Hofmann (Germany), 174 miles; Zabski and Baranowski (Poland), 132 and 129 miles; Sandmeier (Switzerland), 127 miles; and Emi von Roretz (Austria), who went 121 miles and landed near Hamelin. Fräulein von Roretz has certainly improved out of all recognition since she used to fly at the London Gliding Club two years ago.

Monday, June 5, was a day of light northerly winds, insufficient for maintaining height over the north slope of the Wasserkuppe, so pilots glided out over the valley to look for thermals rising from the fields there. The British two-seater sailplane Falcon III proved itself particularly suitable for these conditions, owing to its low sinking rate when flown solo, and Flt. Lt. W. B. Murray and Mr. J. S. Fox, who flew t in turn, showed skill in picking up thermals within a few hundred feet of the ground and climbing in them almost to the base of the clouds which formed in their tops.

On Monday evening, and again on the following day, thundery conditions prevailed, but with very light winds. Several pilots got ready at the launching point in case the expected "cold fronts" should come within reach, and some were actually launched. But the "wedge" of cold air, which may provide soaring possibilities by lifting up the warm air in front of it, is apt to become irregular in mountainous districts such as the Rhön, and the area of "lift" is difficult to connect with, especially if there is insufficient wind to gain preliminary height by soaring over the slopes. The only pilot to make successful use of a "front" was Kurt Schmidt, flying his Atalante, which he designed and built and with which he won last year's National Soaring Competitions; he went about 9 miles.

The Unpopular Front

On Wednesday there was a "warm front," which was no use to anybody.

Thursday, July 8, brought a fairly strong west wind, and the "daily prize" was set for duration, the contest being confined to pilots who had not yet earned the international "Silver C" certificate. By a piece of smart team work the Falcon III was first to reach the launching point in the morning, and Flt. Lt. Murray got into the air before any of his competitors. If only the wind had maintained its strength, he would have automatically won the prize, since all times were reckoned only up to a quarter of an hour before sunset, after which pilots were obliged by the rules to land. However, a failing wind and the cessation of thermal activity let the pilots down one by one in the evening, the Falcon having to land after 5 hours 19 minutes in the air, while the Austrian pilot Frena, flying a Rhönsperber, won the prize with a duration of 6 hours 54 minutes.

Friday July 9, was an excellent day for distance flying, and the new King Kites had their first opportunity of showing their capabilities. The day was much like the previous Sunday, with a little wind up the west slope, but insufficient to save those who, after starting hopefully from the mountain top, were unable to find a thermal before they got down to the bottom, 2,000ft. below Some of the pilots, including those of the King Kites, after landing at the bottom, had their machines rapidly transported back to the top and were launched once more, to find the thermal currents so much improved that they were able to get up to the cloud base and go away on distance flights after all.

The greatest distances were achieved by the five pilots of